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FOURTH PRIZE FUND EXHIBITION.

THE latest "Prize Fund Exhibition," now open in the American Art Galleries, is much inferior in interest to the best of its predecessors. The one prize of \$2000, which was offered this year, has been awarded to Mr. J. Alden Weir, for his large painting "Idle Hours," which though by no means one of his best is yet the most important and artistic piece in the collection. The subject is a favorite one with the painter. A lady and a little girl, understood to be the wife and child of the artist, both dressed in white, are seated on a long divan strewn with cushions, with their backs to a white curtained window through which the light filters. The child has taken possession of the guitar, the mother is gracefully doing nothing in a pose which is not without merit on the score of originality and naturalness. The group has no particular composition nor unity of effect, the drawing is good without being scientific and the redeeming qualities are Mr. Weir's well-known charm of gray color tones and dignity and refinement of treatment. A more commonplace example of good workmanship is Mr. T. Smith-Lewis's immense canvas, with its "mention honorable," sea-weed gatherers awaiting the fall of the tide. A large cart, drawn by three horses, with the high-peaked blue felt collars dear to French teamsters, is stationed in the midst of the wet and shining sand. The horses droop their heads, the drivers lounge on the vehicle, beyond is the ocean deepening to the darkest of blues on the horizon, and overhead is a wet, gray sky. The grouping and foreshortening of the equipage is managed so as to make the most of the insufficient subject, and the painting of the oozing sand and the general atmospheric effect of the scene is very truthful; but the great amount of space which the artist has occupied with his scene is not sufficiently justified. Opposite this, in the first gallery which the visitor enters, hangs another big picture, which was considered to be in the race for the "prize," Otto Wigand's "Reflections—Brittany Courtyard, Sunday Afternoon." Here the conventional painting of conventional peasants is made a trifle more tedious by the properly sentimental rendering. The father, the mother and a half-grown boy sit meditatively on a bench against the cottage wall, a young woman and a small child on the stones of the pavement. The most interesting personage in this family group is the curious old stone well with its domed cover. Much simpler and better is Mr. Hitchcock's "Winnower." The hillside, which rises high on his canvas, is very judiciously and broadly treated, with its growth of tall, tufted, gray grass rising out of the shorter, greener growth, and near the top is a single figure of a peasant woman with a blonde head, a dress in three well-arranged tones of reddish browns and purples and two sieves carried against her sides in such a manner that they become important decorative furniture, like shields or tambourines. Mr. Hitchcock, who, it is to be hoped, will not become spoiled by his sudden success of last year, has adopted Mr. Alma-Tadema's somewhat vainglorious method of numbering his works, and announces in the corner of this canvas that it is "op. XXXVII."

Still in the first gallery is Alexander Harrison's study for the central figure of his important canvas, "In Arcadia," which had such a success at the Salon of 1886, and which, it is announced, he is holding for the International Exhibition in Paris next year. In this painting he has occupied himself solely with the careful rendering of the tones and "values" of his model's body in the open air, and his title becomes somewhat absurd, as indeed it was in the larger composition. In one of the upper galleries is another of his "wave" studies, a long line of surf breaking on the beach and glittering in the morning light in an infinite variety of shifting opalescent blues, greens and violets, like mother-of-pearl. His brother, Mr. Birge Harrison, sends a large woodland scene, "In the Forest of Compiègne," a young girl in the foreground of dull reds, yellows and grays, startled by the appearance of a stag, and a study of twilight effects on the Seine at Paris. Mr. Horatio Walker is represented by a careful little painting of a black and white cow in a green landscape and a large and ironical version of "Spring," a heavy and lumpy ploughman and his team surprised by a tempest of gloom and wind. In the first gallery, between Mr. Smith-Lewis's large sea-piece and Mr. Anderson's commonplace portrait of General O. O. Howard, hangs what is probably the best of the numerous paintings of peasants, Mr. Edward H. Bell's "Shepherd's Family at Prayers."

The three members of the family are camped out on the grass, in some sort of discreet, gray light, but the father alone seems interested in his devotions—the infant, flat on its back on its mother's knee, is certainly not, and the mother's attention seems to be divided. Mr. Bell, although he comes from Munich, contributes a better quality of both sentiment and painting than Mr. Wigand, of Paris, across the room. Miss Emma Lowstadt Chadwick's sympathetic presentation of five old women and a cat taking their five o'clock tea hangs near this picture, and has somewhat of the same quality of sober excellence. Mr. George W. Chambers, of Nashville, Tenn., has found a subject in the mountains of his native State, and shows us an old woman leaning on her hoe in her cabbage garden, just after the sun has set. Beyond her are two rather inadequate-looking cabins; if Mr. Chambers had waited half an hour longer, till the evening shadows had begun to tone down the scenery, he might have secured a more satisfactory picture. As it is, the novelists have still the advantage of him. By Mr. Leon Delachaux is a large picture from the Salon, not in the catalogue, and which represents the children of the village choir singing on their knees in a humble interior at Easter-tide; by Mr. E. Leon Durand is a big "Promenade by the Scheldt at Antwerp," the quay crowded with ill-drawn and uninteresting figures; by Mr. William Morgan is a kneeling young mother rocking the cradle of her baby, a "subject" quite as good as Mr. Weir's, but rendered hopelessly commonplace by his treatment. This list includes all the paintings that, by virtue of their merits or importance, might have been considered as competitors for the prize, but the committee of three, chosen by the subscribers to the fund for this exhibition, had but little difficulty in awarding the honor to Mr. Weir by a unanimous vote. The contributors were Messrs. George I. Seney, Joseph J. Little, Benjamin Altman, Irwin Davis, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Thomas B. Clarke, the two members of the firm and Mr. W. T. Walters, of Baltimore, and Mr. Andrew Carnegie, of Pittsburgh. As these gentlemen are mostly residents of this city, the prize picture goes to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The sculpture of the exhibition is mostly grouped in the middle of the first gallery, and consists of two heroic nude figures, some busts, several statuettes and two or three studies of animals. Nearer the entrance are ranged several works in marble and plaster by Miss Grant, of London, which bear a certain stamp of refinement, but are generally lacking in strength. Further back in the room is a bronze group recalling the legend of St. Julien l' Hospitalier affrightened by the appearance around him of all the animals he had hunted. The sculptor is Mr. J. M. Van der Kemp; his work received an honorable mention at last year's Salon, but he has by no means made the most of his very good subject. The saint, in his hunting costume, is sufficiently scared, but it is evidently by the presence of a huge serpent that uncoils itself between his legs; on his right is a totally unconcerned wolf and on his left a sinuous crouching leopard that carries in its teeth the dart that had slain it. This animal is the only feature of the group that suggests the supernatural atmosphere of the story. Of the work in plaster, the best is Mr. Charles H. Niehaus's statuette of Silenus, inspired by the bronze found at Pompeii, but spirited and showing good technical qualities. His large statue of an athlete scraping himself with a strigil is better than Mr. Dallin's Indian hunter discharging his bow, of which the head alone has good character, while the pose seems strained and impossible and the feet quite insufficient. Mr. Alois Loehrer's "Turtle Charmer" is a bacchante dancing on the back of a somewhat surprised tortoise.

Some of the best work in the exhibition may be found among the smaller paintings, and the visitor will also discover so much that is unworthy that he will hear with concern of the two or three hundred pictures said to have been refused. Most of the well-known landscape painters are represented by works executed in their well-known manner; sometimes, as in the cases of Messrs. Eaton, Chase and Ochtman, the level of their exhibits is of the usual high average; sometimes, as in the case of Mr. Palmer, with his "Blue Barred Snow," they seem to be falling behind their previous work, and sometimes, as in the case of Mr. Edward Gay, with his little picture of "Ripening Grain"—one of the best representations of air and light in all the rooms—they rise to heights of excellence. Sometimes, also, they seem to be striving after new means of expression, successfully, like Mr. Rehn,

and not altogether satisfactorily, like Mr. Bruce Crane. Mr. R. Swain Gifford is represented by two examples, one of which, "A Kansas Ranch," is remarkable for the successful rendering of the distant hills and plains. Mr. Boggs sends four canvases, moderate in size and careful and sober in execution. By Mr. George Bogert is a "Late Afternoon at Amagansett," the level stretches of sand growing purple in the distance; by Miss Maria Brooks, whose contributions are more than those of any other exhibitor, is a small study of a seated female figure, nude to the waist, and though somewhat painty, solid and vigorously modelled. Of the few portraits in the collection, the most interesting one is by Mr. Leslie G. Cauldwell, a lady in a Japanese robe, graceful and rather pleasant and rich in color. Mr. Denman sends a little color sketch of a maid testing the heat of her flat-iron by approaching it to her cheek; Mr. Ruger Donoho, a large forest scene, in which the cattle, the rocks and the dead leaves are all of the same unpleasantly untruthful substance, and Mr. Moss, a large "Flower Market." Mr. McCloskey's study of tropical fruit, in which the painting of the oranges and bananas is pushed nearly to the last extremity of mere truthfulness of rendering, hangs near Mr. Weir's "Still Life," in which this truthfulness is sacrificed to an artistic effect that, somehow, seems to better Nature.

CALIFORNIA ART GOSSIP.

THERE is an excellent school of design in San Francisco, whose large and well-lighted rooms are in the Art Association building in Pine Street. Emil Carlsen, well known in New York, is the director and principal teacher, and A. Joullin is his assistant. Two notable graduates are Theodore Wores and Mrs. Mary C. Richardson. The former, while still a pupil at the school, took great interest in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco, and made capital studies of that squalid but picturesque region. One of these formed the basis for a painting which so pleased Lord Roseberry, while on the Pacific Coast, that he bought it for \$1500, and with the money thus earned Mr. Wores went to Europe to study. After three years passed at the principal art centres, he went to Japan, and painted there the home and street life of the natives in a very realistic manner. Many of these pictures and studies were exhibited in San Francisco in January, and I believe they are now to be seen in New York. Two excellent examples were bought by the widow of Mark Hopkins for her new home in Great Barrington.

Mrs. Richardson, the other former pupil referred to, of the San Francisco School of Design, is well known in New York, where you will remember last year she won the prize for the best picture painted in the United States by a woman, by her "Lenten Lilies," in the National Academy exhibition. She since exhibited a larger picture of a young woman holding up a little child to an apple-tree loaded with blossoms. The charm of color in this canvas is enhanced by the delicate tints of the frame. In February these pictures, with others by Mrs. Richardson, were exhibited in Santa Barbara, at a reception given in her honor at a charming house in the suburbs, which was attended by many resident artists and tourists in the vicinity, including Mr. H. C. Ford, well known there by his paintings and etchings of the old Missions, many of which are to be seen at the Boston Museum, and of the older Spanish houses and the picturesque adobe dwellings of the place. Among several ladies in Santa Barbara who have achieved some success in art may be mentioned Mrs. A. P. Austin, just returned from three years of study in Europe, Mrs. C. W. Lunt, Mrs. I. R. Baxley, and Miss Cooper. The fine choice of material for out-door sketching in and near Santa Barbara draws many lovers of art to this part of California. Mr. Samuel Colman has been there during part of the winter, employing much of his leisure time in photography. Miss Hunt, sister of the late William M. Hunt, having visited Lower California, is now resting there, making strikingly artistic sketches on the coast.

At Los Angeles Mr. Alexander F. Harmer has a studio. He is an enthusiastic student of aboriginal character, and finds abundant subjects for his easel in the Indians of Arizona and California, and the old Missions there. During his four years' residence among the Indians he has got together a remarkable collection of objects illustrating their lives and customs, which he turns to good account in his pictures.

L. S. K.